**Non-Verbal Communication Modes (Some interesting stuff about what we´ve deal with in classes)**

What is non-verbal communication?

Definition “nonverbal communication involves those nonverbal stimuli in a communication setting that are generated by both the source and his or her use of the environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver. Basically it is sending and receiving messages in a variety of ways without the use of verbal codes (words). It is both intentional and unintentional. Most speakers / listeners are not conscious of this. It includes — but is not limited to:

*touch*

*glance*

*eye contact*

*volume*

*vocal nuance*

*proximity*

*gestures*

*facial expression ? pause*

*intonation*

*dress*

*posture*

*word choice and syntax*

*sounds (paralanguage)*

Broadly speaking, there are two basic categories of non-verbal language:

nonverbal messages produced by the body;

nonverbal messages produced by the broad setting (time, space, silence)

Why is non-verbal communication important?

Basically, it is one of the key aspects of communication (and especially important in a high-context culture). It has multiple functions:

Used to repeat the verbal message (e.g. point in a direction while stating directions.

Often used to accent a verbal message. (e.g. verbal tone indicates the actual meaning of the specific words).

Often complement the verbal message but also may contradict. E.g.: a nod reinforces a positive message (among Americans); a “wink” may contradict a stated positive message.

Regulate interactions (non-verbal cues covey when the other person should speak or not speak).

May substitute for the verbal message (especially if it is blocked by noise, interruption, etc) — i.e. gestures (finger to lips to indicate need for quiet), facial expressions (i.e. a nod instead of a yes).

Note the implications of the proverb: “Actions speak louder than words.” In essence, this underscores the importance of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is especially significant in intercultural situations. Probably non-verbal differences account for typical difficulties in communicating.

Cultural Differences in Non-verbal Communication

General Appearance and Dress

All cultures are concerned for how they look and make judgments based on looks and dress. Americans, for instance, appear almost obsessed with dress and personal attractiveness. Consider differing cultural standards on what is attractive in dress and on what constitutes modesty. Note ways dress is used as a sign of status?

Body Movement

We send information on attitude toward person (facing or leaning towards another), emotional statue (tapping fingers, jiggling coins), and desire to control the environment (moving towards or away from a person).

More than 700,000 possible motions we can make — so impossible to categorize them all! But just need to be aware the body movement and position is a key ingredient in sending messages.

Posture

Consider the following actions and note cultural differences:

Bowing (not done, criticized, or affected in US; shows rank in Japan)

Slouching (rude in most Northern European areas)

Hands in pocket (disrespectful in Turkey)

Gestures

Impossible to catalog them all. But need to recognize: 1) incredible possibility and variety and 2) that an acceptable in one’s own culture may be offensive in another. In addition, amount of gesturing varies from culture to culture. Some cultures are animated; other restrained. Restrained cultures often feel animated cultures lack manners and overall restraint. Animated cultures often feel restrained cultures lack emotion or interest.

Pointing : US with index finger; Germany with little finger; Japanese with entire hand (in fact most Asians consider pointing with index finger to be rude)

Counting: Thumb = 1 in Germany, 5 in Japan, middle finger for 1 in Indonesia.

Facial Expressions

While some say that facial expressions are identical, meaning attached to them differs. Majority opinion is that these do have similar meanings world-wide with respect to smiling, crying, or showing anger, sorrow, or disgust. However, the intensity varies from culture to culture. Note the following:

Many Asian cultures suppress facial expression as much as possible.

Many Mediterranean (Latino / Arabic) cultures exaggerate grief or sadness while most American men hide grief or sorrow.

Some see “animated” expressions as a sign of a lack of control.

Too much smiling is viewed in as a sign of shallowness.

Women smile more than men.

Eye Contact

In USA, eye contact indicates: degree of attention or interest, influences attitude change or persuasion, regulates interaction, communicates emotion, defines power and status, and has a central role in managing impressions of others.

Western cultures — see direct eye to eye contact as positive (advise children to look a person in the eyes). But within USA, African-Americans use more eye contact when talking and less when listening with reverse true for Anglo Americans. This is a possible cause for some sense of unease between races in US. A prolonged gaze is often seen as a sign of sexual interest.

Arabic cultures make prolonged eye-contact. — believe it shows interest and helps them understand truthfulness of the other person. (A person who doesn’t reciprocate is seen as untrustworthy)

Japan, Africa, Latin American, Caribbean — avoid eye contact to show respect.

Touch

Question: Why do we touch, where do we touch, and what meanings do we assign when someone else touches us?

Illustration: An African-American male goes into a convenience store recently taken over by new Korean immigrants. He gives a $20 bill for his purchase to Mrs Cho who is cashier and waits for his change. He is upset when his change is put down on the counter in front of him.

What is the problem? Traditional Korean (and many other Asian countries) don’t touch strangers., especially between members of the opposite sex. But the African-American sees this as another example of discrimination (not touching him because he is black).

Paralanguage

vocal characterizers (laugh, cry, yell, yawn). These send different messages in different cultures (Japan — giggling indicates embarrassment; India – belch indicates satisfaction)

vocal qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythm, tempo, and tone). Loudness indicates strength in Arabic cultures and softness indicates weakness; indicates confidence and authority to the Germans,; indicates impoliteness to the Thais; indicates loss of control to the Japanese. (Generally, one learns not to “shout” in Asia for nearly any reason!). Gender based as well: women tend to speak higher and more softly than men.

vocal segregates (un-huh, shh, uh, ooh, mmmh, humm, eh, mah, lah). Segregates indicate formality, acceptance, assent, uncertainty.